

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 141.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1891. PRICE TWOPENCE.

CROSS CURRENTS.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE light was perfect, and his picture was in an extremely interesting stage; but at three o'clock the next afternoon, Humphrey Cornish gave up the attempt at work, which had been more or less unsuccessful all the day, and determined to go out for a walk. His thoughts were running on Selma, unconnectedly but incessantly, and they all turned eventually to one end—his disappointment in her.

He had been thinking of her as she had been when she was looking forward to that first appearance which Roger's coming had prevented—a young girl full of enthusiasm and devotion to her work. Perhaps no one in those days had better appreciated than Humphrey the genius that was in her, no one had certainly so sympathised with the genuine artist spirit which had been hers. He had watched her and understood her as only a kindred spirit could have done, and his sympathy had had in it always a touch of pity for the pain life was so likely to bring, when the depths of her nature should be stirred, to so passionate and sensitive a creature. He had told himself often in those days that she would probably suffer, but he had thought of the suffering that perfects.

He had watched her during the terrible struggle which had preceded the breaking of her engagement with Roger; watched

her, understanding the irresistible impulse under which she struggled, with little doubt as to what the end must be, and with a sad conviction that it was better she should reach that end unaided. He had believed that a collision between her heart and her artist nature was inevitable, not knowing of the prompting she had received, and he had looked to her after life to justify her choice. And now for the past two years he had known that she was deteriorating—deteriorating day by day as artist and as woman, until his old belief in her was utterly destroyed, his hope for her was shattered.

As Tyrrell had believed that she had grasped at society life in wounded pride and disappointment, Humphrey had believed that she was looking for forgetfulness. That she should apparently find it in admiration, in popularity, in the noise and rush of fashionable life, was what he had not expected; it had destroyed his faith in her as nothing else could have done. Would she marry Tyrrell? he asked himself, sadly. Marry him, perhaps, for his position, perhaps for old friendship's sake. He had little doubt that she would.

He put aside his palette and brushes and went out of the room and down to the hall, and, as he took his hat, Helen came downstairs to him. She had the little Helen in her arms, a dainty baby figure in its cool white sun-bonnet, with the fair little face all smiles, and dimples, and brown eyes, and she was laughing and talking to her as she came.

"Are you going out, dear?" she said, happily. "Baby is going out too; I'm waiting for nurse to take her. We thought it was very hot in the nursery, didn't we, my precious?" pressing her cheek against the soft baby face, which was so like it. "No,

sweetheart, father doesn't want you now," she added, hugging the little thing with a delighted laugh, as the little plump arms made demonstrations towards Humphrey. "Shall you be long, dear?"

"Not very, Nell!" he answered, smiling at her and at the laughing face under the white sun-bonnet.

"It's a lovely day," she responded. "I wish Selma could go out. Humphrey, I'm not satisfied about her, dear; she looks so dreadfully ill."

"She has been going out too much," said Humphrey, as he opened the door. "Good-bye, Nell." He kissed both the Helens—the little one as well as the big one—and went out.

Helen stood on the threshold in the sunshine smiling after him as he went, and as she went back into the hall with the baby in her arms, laughing and conversing after her present undeveloped fashion, she started and smiled; Selma was standing at the foot of the stairs.

"How quietly you came down, dear!" she exclaimed. "Are you rested? You look like a ghost, you are so pale!"

But it was not pallor alone that had so changed the beautiful face. The forty-eight hours which had passed since the garden-party had taken every trace of colour from Selma's cheeks—from her very lips—and her eyes were sunken and hollow; but, however they had been passed, those hours had left deeper traces yet. There was a still stricken look in the white face—a look which changed it as no passion of anguish could have done. She did not move as Helen spoke to her, taking no notice of the little Helen's eager, inarticulate calls to her, and she stood in the same position, with one hand resting on the balusters, as she said in a low, toneless voice:

"I came to tell you that I have business with Mr. Tyrrell when he comes this afternoon. You will not let any one be shown in?"

"Of course not, dear!" returned Helen, cheerily. "Go into the drawing-room, and wait there for him quietly. You shan't be disturbed!" She opened the drawing-room door, close to which she was standing, as she spoke, and looked in. "It is nice and cool," she said. "Let me see you comfortably settled before I go upstairs."

Selma took her hand from the balusters and moved slowly to the door, and on the threshold Helen put her arm round her to draw her on.

"Why, you are quite cold, Selma!" she exclaimed.

"Am I?" said Selma, in the same toneless voice. "I will sit here, in the sun."

She sat down as she spoke, and Helen drew up a blind that the sun might fall more freely upon her.

"There!" she said, "now you can't be cold long. Good-bye, dear!" She bent down as she spoke to kiss her sister, and as she did so the baby in her arms stretched out two little soft hands and stroked the white face with a soft murmur. "Kiss poor auntie, then!" said Helen, merrily. "Selma, how fond she is of you!"

Selma did not answer. For an instant, as the warm, dimpled cheek touched hers, she pressed her face closely against it, and then the two Helens went away together, turning two happy, smiling faces towards her from the door, that the little one might blow her a parting kiss.

Selma did not move. She made no change in her attitude, though the chair she had taken was one in which she never sat, and in which she looked curiously rigid and unnatural. She sat there for nearly twenty minutes, looking straight before her, with her dark eyes absolutely expressionless; but the July sun in which she sat apparently did not warm her, for when the door-bell rang at last, she shivered again painfully. She moved for the first time a minute later, when John Tyrrell was shown into the room.

"What a delicious day!" he said, as he came towards her. "I hope you are better for it?" And then he stopped suddenly, shocked and startled for the moment at the sight of her face. "I am sorry to see that you look very ill!" he said, gravely.

He held out his hand as he spoke, and before Selma took it there was a hardly perceptible pause. As he came into the room she had flushed crimson, and the flush had been succeeded by the deadly whiteness which had called forth his last words. The same deep, painful colour came to her cheeks again as she placed her hand in his, and to his astonishment, though she was standing in a flood of afternoon sunshine, her hand as he touched it was cold as ice.

"I am not ill," she said, quietly. "Thank you for coming."

Short as it was, Tyrrell had noticed the interval which had elapsed before she took his hand, and had noticed her change of colour, and an idea had flashed across his

mind, which was strengthened as she spoke by something new and indefinable in her manner to him—something cold and distant, which seemed to make their old familiar intercourse a thing of the past. Was it possible, he asked himself, that she had heard what Humphrey Cornish had repeated to him last night? The thought was an eminently disagreeable one; and as Selma sat down again, and he followed her example, he took advantage of her silence to review the position of affairs, and rapidly readjust his plan of campaign to provide for this unexpected contingency.

The silence was broken by Selma. She had reseated herself in the same constrained, uncharacteristic attitude, as though some painful mental tension affected her whole personality. Her voice as she spoke was thin and hard.

"I asked you to come and see me," she began, "because it seemed to me that I should owe you an explanation."

"An explanation!" repeated Tyrrell. He had put away his thoughts the instant she spoke, and was leaning forward with quiet solicitude, every sense keenly alert and ready to turn anything that might occur to his own ends. "I have told you very often that you never owe me anything," he said, with a smile. He was looking straight into her face, and, as she met his eyes, she drew back suddenly and shivered again slightly. She seemed to put something away from her mental consciousness with an effort before she went on:

"I want to say first that I have been thinking only for myself; one can never see for other people." She paused a moment and then continued: "But one sees things for oneself sometimes, and then one must act. I have been waked up."

She stopped, catching her breath for an instant. She was looking, not at him, but straight beyond him, and if, as she said, she had been waked, her face was as the face of a woman who has waked face to face with death. Tyrrell watched her, wondering and waiting until her words should give him some clue on which to speak.

"I saw it all at once," she went on, in the same subdued tone. "And I have thought it all out since. I have let myself be dazzled and carried away by excitement, and admiration, and popularity. I have lost sight of truth and reality. I have forgotten the end."

She paused again—her eyes very large

and dark—and then on Tyrrell's consciousness there dawned for the first time a slight glimmer of a bars possibility that there might be something in the girl before him of which he had never, as yet, had any conception. Before he could recover himself sufficiently to speak, Selma had resumed in a quiet, unemotional way.

"I thought it right to tell you," she said, "that I am going to work again. I shall not go out any more. If I have thrown it all away—if it is too late—I can work all my life at least."

"Will you tell me what you mean?" said Tyrrell, quietly.

"Haven't I told you?" she answered, in the same unmoved way, turning her white, still face towards him. "I have seen the truth about the life I have been leading. I know now that it is all false and a mistake; that work and art have nothing to do with it; that nothing true or strong can ever come of it. I did not know—at least, I did not think—I let myself believe it was all in the day's work. But now I know."

Tyrrell experienced the sensation of a man who has worked his way with infinite care and thought through numberless devious lanes and alleys to find himself, when he thought himself absolutely at his goal, face to face with a blank wall. For all possible contingencies he thought he had prepared, and now he found himself face to face with something he had never dreamed of. She was not thinking of him; she had passed out of the world in which he lived and schemed into a sphere where none of his plans could help him.

He leant back in his chair, looked at Selma for a moment without speaking; then he said, gently:

"What has suggested all this to you, Selma?" He spoke partly with a desire to gain time, partly with the idea of getting some more extended idea of her state of mind, and neither in tone nor manner was there the faintest trace of the irritation he was feeling.

She smiled faintly.

"A voice!" she said. "I heard it all put into words, Mr. Tyrrell, and I knew that they were true. It was at the garden-party—not a likely place to hear the truth about oneself." The voice died away, and she looked as though she were listening again to the words she had heard; and then, for the first time, her white face quivered and trembled, and she covered it suddenly with her hands. "I did not

know," she cried, low and brokenly. "I never thought! I never thought! Oh! if it should be too late!"

She stopped, and there was a silence. Tyrrell was thinking that, after all, the fate that had nullified all his plans might be his best friend. His eyes were very bright and keen, as they rested on the dark, bowed head before him; he calculated the chances for and against him swiftly and resolutely, and he determined to make his move.

He rose quietly and stood beside her, resting one hand on the back of her chair.

"It is not too late, Selma," he said. "Your life is all before you still, and you will not throw it away. What you have heard to give you this pain I do not know, but I do know that it cannot have been the truth." He waited, half expecting that she would protest; but she did not speak or look up at him, though her hands had fallen from her face. They were tightly clasped in her lap, and she seemed to shrink a little as he stood over her, and rather to suffer than to listen to his words.

"The truth is this," he went on, very gently. "You are young, Selma, and the admiration and popularity you are so hard upon came to you very suddenly. You have been over-excited and over-tired, and perhaps you have, as you say, thought less than you will do for the future about your work. Selma, you want some one to help you and take care of you."

Suddenly and abruptly, as though some intolerable and incredible possibility were taking definite shape, for the first time Selma rose from her chair. It was not surprise in her face, rather the shock of unendurable conviction, of realisation, which seemed more than she could bear.

A strangled gasp broke from her, and she stretched out one hand, that trembled all at once like a leaf, as though to keep off the something that had broken on her in that instant.

Tyrrell took the hand firmly into both his own, and at his touch, as suddenly as her strange emotion had shaken her, it seemed to leave her—to leave her turned to stone, she stood so white and motionless.

"Selma," he said, softly, "don't let me startle you. What I am going to say has been part of my life for so long that I cannot bear to think of its coming upon you as a shock. You have thought of me—when you have thought of me at all—always as your friend alone, I know. Selma, I love you!" A strong shudder

ran through her frame, but she did not speak. Her face was like a marble mask, and as he looked at it Tyrrell changed colour slightly. "I won't ask you," he said, "to give me love, as yet. Give me the right to help you, Selma. Be my wife!"

"I am sorry, Mr. Tyrrell. It is quite impossible."

She spoke the few words coldly and quietly, drawing away her hand from his astonished hold, and moving to the other side of the room, leaving Tyrrell absolutely rooted to the ground in his amazement—not so much at the refusal itself as at the manner of it. A moment passed, at least, before he could recover himself sufficiently to find any words, and then he said, speaking almost as quietly as she had done:

"Impossible, Selma! That is a hard word. At least you will tell me why it is impossible?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Selma responded in the same unnatural, unmoved tone:

"I do not love you, Mr. Tyrrell."

"That is no reason," he returned, quickly, crossing the room towards her. "I do not ask you to love me yet. Marry me, and it will come with time."

"I cannot."

"But give me a reason. Tell me why you cannot. Selma, is that so much for your old friend to ask? Tell me why."

"I have told you."

She drew back from his outstretched hands as she spoke; and, as he realised the determination in her tone, as he realised that he was failing, that she was slipping from his grasp, a passion such as he had never felt for her before seized him and carried him beyond his own self-control.

"You have not!" he cried. "It is no reason. If I am willing to wait for your love, why should you not give me all I ask? I love you, Selma, I love you, and I would win your love in time."

"Never!"

The word came from her in a low, vibrating tone which yet seemed to fill the room, and Tyrrell took a rapid step towards her.

"It is given, then, to another man?" he said, and he caught her hand in his.

Even as he touched her, Selma wrenched herself from his hold, and turned upon him at last, her eyes blazing, her whole face alight and aglow with passion.

"Given!" she cried. "Oh, have we

known nothing, absolutely nothing, of each other all these years? Is there no sympathy, no comprehension in the world? Given! Oh, Roger, Roger! It was his when I sent him out of my life, though I was a child, and I didn't know what it meant. Ah, I have known since! I loved him then, I love him now, and I shall love him till I die. Given! You think lightly of a woman's love, Mr. Tyrrell. You believe that she can give it, and recall it, and give it again, as though it were a plaything. You are wrong, you are wrong! Women are not all—"

She stopped abruptly, looking at him for a moment with something like horror in her eyes, and then the colour rushed over her face again, and she clasped her hands over it.

There was no answer. Speechless and motionless, Tyrrell stood before her self-convicted and helpless. He had misunderstood. His premises were false, his calculations were false, and for the moment his brain-power availed him nothing. The doubt as to whether he had really fathomed her, which had touched Tyrrell earlier in their interview, had risen suddenly into irresistible conviction to strike him dumb. The contrast between the petty sentiments of wounded pride and girlish disappointment which he had attributed to her, and the strong, enduring force of the woman's love with which he was now face to face, utterly overwhelmed him. It seemed to him that many moments passed—though he made no effort to speak—before Selma slowly lifted her face, quite white now.

"You have made a mistake, Mr. Tyrrell!" she said, bitterly. "You have held love cheap, as you have held art cheap—as I have held art cheap. Oh!" she cried, suddenly, clasping her hands passionately, "have I broken my own heart for nothing—for nothing? Have I lost it all—work and art as well as love? Is there nothing before me but the mockery I have now? I trusted you, Mr. Tyrrell; I trusted you in this as I trusted you in everything, and every way—" She broke off again, and again there was the same horror in her eyes. "You told me it was the way," she went on, and the words were a cry of despairing reproach. "You told me, and I believed you! What did I care for society and excitement? What did I care for anything when I knew that I had lost him for ever? Success was nothing to me—it never had been anything. Shall I ever forget that first success when I realised

that nothing could ever take his place? And afterwards there was no hope for me—none—but to do what I had thrown away my happiness that I might do. I had sacrificed my love in the service of art. What did it matter to me how I worked? All I hoped for was forgetfulness!"

The words broke away into a wailing cry, and the face of the man before her—as white now as her own—twitched painfully.

"And now I have lost everything," she cried. "I sacrificed my love to art, and I sacrificed art to its counterfeit. I have lost you too! I trusted you, and I respected you, and it is all over. I have nothing, and I am nothing, and I have wronged and degraded the two things I held most sacred. But my faith in them remains! It shall remain! It shall! And I will hold to that. It can't be that I have spoilt my life for a delusion after all! There must be—I know there is—a truth and a reality in art, and I will find it and stand on it! It is lowering to love to let its suffering spoil one's life. I will not lower it, for it shall make me strong."

She lifted her face as she spoke, agonised and quivering with her passionate struggle to grasp and hold to the truth she had asserted with such desperate insistence. As he looked at her, all Tyrrell's better nature rose within him and he loved her. The next moment her eyes fell upon his face, she dropped her hands with a gesture of despair, as though her strength were gone.

"It's all gone at once!" she cried, brokenly. "Everything is gone together—everything!"

And then there was a long silence.

There was no sound of any kind in the room. Selma had sunk into a chair, her face hidden, and Tyrrell had turned mechanically and walked to the window. The soft summer air floated into the room, the summer sunlight moved along the wall, and by-and-by, from the hall, came the voice of little Helen, brought again from her walk. How long the stillness lasted Tyrrell never knew. He only knew that he was face to face with what he had not seen for many years—himself as he really was. He only knew that he was not worthy to touch the hand of the girl who had shown him the truth, and that he loved her.

"If she knew all of me," he said to himself. "If she knew all!"

At last, with a face so grey and drawn

as to be hardly recognisable, he turned and looked at her. He had made no calculation, no plans; he had no thought left for effect. He waited a moment more, not to consider, but to control himself, and then he crossed the room and stood beside her.

"You have shown me the truth," he said, in a voice so low and broken that it hardly sounded like John Tyrrell's voice at all. "I cannot defend myself, even if I wished it. Selma, I cannot help you—help me. Don't send me away for ever from the purity and truth I see in you. Give me some hope that some day in the future, when your love grows, not less, but less intensely present with you, you will think of me—you will let me ask you once again to be my wife. Selma, have pity on me!"

She was half lying, half sitting, her hands clasped against the low back of her chair, her face hidden on them; as he spoke, her head had fallen lower and lower, and her whole form had seemed to collapse and shrink as if in an agony of distress. He finished, and she lifted her head and turned to him suddenly; her eyes were large and beautiful with pity and anguish, and her tears were falling fast.

"Ah!" she cried, "Mr. Tyrrell, don't speak to me like that! I cannot bear it. Oh, I have looked up to you all my life, I have thought you everything that is good, and strong, and true! I cannot bear to see you—lowered! Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!" She stretched out her hands as she spoke his name with a cry in which all the love and reverence of her girlhood were blended with a great pity and grief; but as he stretched out his own hands to take hers, she shrank back suddenly and dropped her face again upon the cushions of her chair.

He came a step nearer.

"Selma," he said again, hoarsely. "Selma, have pity on me!"

"Pity!" she cried. "Oh, have I not pity? Everything is more bitter because of this; everything is harder and more hopeless to me because this has come to me too—the loss of you, the loss of my faith in my friend. Is not my heart almost breaking with pity and shame? But I can never be your wife, Mr. Tyrrell! Never, never, never!"

As she said the word shame, a ghastly change had come over Tyrrell's face. He did not move, but he stood gazing down upon her as she lay with her face hidden from him with something rigid and strained about every line of him. As she finished,

one word came from him in a harsh, hoarse voice—the voice of a man who meant to be answered. "Why?"

"I have had—a letter."

Her face was pressed so closely to the cushion, that the words were hardly audible, and she shrank further and further into the depth of the chair.

"From—?"

"Lady Latter!"

The two words came from her in a choked, hardly articulate whisper, and having uttered them she lay crushed tightly against the cushions, her face pressed down on them, her fingers driven into them and clinging to them as though she would never raise herself again.

There was a moment during which John Tyrrell seemed to collapse and lose his presence and his stature as he stood, and then he turned and left the room.

SOMETHING ABOUT RELICS.

WHEN Erasmus and Dean Colet went on their famous pilgrimage to Canterbury, they were shown a large number of relics of "Saint" Thomas à Becket, but failed to regard them with the awe and admiration they usually excited in the minds of devout pilgrims. There was the point of the sword with which the Archbishop's brain was pierced; the pierced skull; the hair shirt, the girdle, and the bandages with which he was wont to mortify his flesh and subdue all carnal appetites. There was also the staff on which he leaned, and the napkin with which he wiped his face; besides some linen rags which had done duty as pocket-handkerchiefs. The Prior offered one of these to Colet; but the Reformer, touching it fastidiously with his finger-tips, contemptuously put it down, uttering at the same time a low whistle, as was his custom, says Erasmus, when anything displeased him. Other relics were exhibited: "an enormous quantity of bones, skulls, chins, hands, teeth, fingers, and entire arms," which they were expected to kiss. An arm was produced, the flesh of which was still bloody. Colet shrank back from kissing it, and his feelings of disgust were very plainly expressed on his countenance. After leaving the Cathedral, the two travellers proceeded towards London, and at Harbledown, just outside the City, a mendicant approached them, sprinkling them with holy water, and offering the upper

leather of a shoe, which it was the custom of pilgrims to salute, at the same time giving the man a small piece of money. Dean Colet, says Erasmus, bore tolerably well the sprinkling with water, but when the shoe was held out, asked the man what he meant by it. He replied, "it was the shoe of Saint Thomas." Colet thereupon waxed wroth, and turning to Erasmus, expressed his views on the situation in no measured terms.

With his accustomed discretion, Erasmus, in commenting upon this incident, observes: "To speak the truth, I think it would be better if these things were left alone; but it is always my habit to find what sort of goodness I can in evils which cannot suddenly be corrected." And, unquestionably, notwithstanding their ridiculous and painful sides, notwithstanding the extravagances and superstitious follies of which they were the cause, a "sort of goodness" might, at first, have been discovered in the sanctity which mediæval Christianity attached to the real or pretended relics of the saints and martyrs. It sprang out of a very natural and proper feeling; out of the desire we almost all of us cherish, to obtain and preserve something which has belonged to those we have known and loved; out of the almost universal craving for some memorial, however slight, of the warrior or statesman, the poet or patriot, who has made his mark on the world's history or literature by great deeds or thoughts. It was in this feeling—legitimate enough in itself—that the reverential attitude of the early Church towards the relics of its saints, martyrs, confessors, and divines originated. Unhappily, it too soon degenerated into a paltry superstition, a degrading credulity, which the priesthood encouraged for the sake of the gains it brought them in money and influence.

It was inevitable that this exaggerated importance should conduce to fraud and imposture. The demand created the supply; relics were suddenly discovered at critical moments, and a brisk trade sprang up in manufactured shams. In 487, when Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch, claimed jurisdiction over Cyprus, and Anthimus, Metropolitan of the island, was summoned to Constantinople to answer the claim, the Bishop, on the eve of his departure, was visited in a dream by Saint Barnabas, who made known to him the place of his interment. The Apostle's body was accordingly found, and, along

with it, a copy of Saint Matthew's Gospel, written by Saint Barnabas himself. With this treasure in his possession, Anthimus started for Constantinople, where he refuted the Patriarch's pretensions by showing that the Church of Cyprus, like that of Antioch, had an Apostolic origin. What could be more opportune than the dream and the discovery?

We get an edifying glimpse, in the Itinerary of Saint Antonius, of the manner in which the new idolatry was spreading. At Cæsarea his attention was directed to the seat occupied by the Virgin Mary, when the archangel Gabriel announced to her the great destiny for which she was reserved, as well as to a basket which had once belonged to her. At Cana he slept on the couch which had been assigned to our Lord at the marriage feast, and, according to the custom of travellers in all ages, he and a fellow-traveller carved their names upon it. At Sarepta he saw the Prophet Elijah's bed; and at Nazareth he admired in the synagogue a beam on which the Child Jesus had been used to seat himself with his comrades; it enjoyed, he says, the singular property of moving at the slightest touch from a Christian, but of remaining fixed and firm when a Jew endeavoured to uplift it.

At every step the pilgrim came upon some memorial of sacred events and things. As, for instance, the tree which Zacchæus climbed to see the Saviour pass by; the fig-tree on which Judas Iscariot hung himself; the altar where Abraham made ready to sacrifice Isaac; the stones with which Saint Stephen was murdered; and, more astonishing than any of these, the "corner-stone" so often mentioned metaphorically in Holy Writ!

I am not sure whether Fleury is right in his assertion that the relics, or supposed relics of Saint Stephan, were the first which came into Europe; but it is said that the historian Orosius, who in 415 visited Jerusalem, carried them back with him to Spain. Thenceforward the East incessantly met the demands of Western Christendom. Its treasures seemed inexhaustible. There was not a pilgrim who, on his return from the Holy Land, did not bring with his scallop-shell and staff some precious relic as a souvenir of his voyage, just as the modern traveller comes home loaded with memorials of the places he has visited—with bric-à-brac from the Italian cities or wood-carvings from Swiss chalets.

Even so strong-minded a man as Pope Gregory the First fell into the prevailing error. He was accustomed to send, as a mark of his special favour, presents of keys in which had been worked up—it was said—some filings of Saint Peter's chains, accompanying the gift with a prayer that what had bound the Apostle for martyrdom might release the recipient from his sins. You will find in Baronius some extraordinary tales of the miracles which those keys were supposed to have effected. The Empress Constantine solicited the Pope to send her the head or some part of the body of Saint Paul, to consecrate, in a peculiar manner, the church which she was building in honour of the great Apostle. Gregory, of course, replied that it was not the custom at Rome to lay violent hands on the remains of the martyrs. He added that many persons, who had presumed to handle the bodies of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, had been struck dead in consequence; and that he could send her only a cloth which had touched the Apostle's body; but such cloths, he reminded her, possessed the same miraculous power as the relics themselves. The practice of removing relics, he said in conclusion, gave occasion to fraud, as in the case of some Greek monks who, when detected in digging up dead bodies by night at Rome, had confessed to an intention of passing them off in Greece as relics of martyrs.

As the appetite grows by what it feeds upon, the relic-mania continued its increasing course. The second Nicæan Council ordered that no church should be consecrated unless it enshrined some relics, and imputes a disregard for them to the opponents of images, which, however, they strenuously denied. Those held in the highest esteem—the relics of our Lord and His Virgin Mother—multiplied rapidly. More than one locality contended for the honour of possessing the "seamless coat" and the napkin which had bound the head of Christ in the sepulchre. Among the riches of the monastery of Centulles, under Abbot Angilbert, who died in 801, were fragments of the manger in which was laid the Holy Child; of the candle lighted at His birth; of His vesture and sandals; of the rock on which He sat when He fed the five thousand; of the bread which He gave to His disciples; of the cross; of the sponge; with portions of the Blessed Virgin's milk, her hair, her dress, and her cloak. There was much jealousy between

monasteries and minsters as to the relative value of their relics; and the translation of a relic from one place to another was made the occasion of special solemnities. It was believed that sometimes, in answer to earnest prayer, relics were sent down from heaven; and the saints still continued to appear to favoured disciples and point out where their remains were deposited. Pope Paschal the First had fallen asleep one day during the psalmody—which must have been painfully soporific—before Saint Peter's tomb, when Saint Cecilia flashed upon him, and assured him that though the Lombards had sought for her body they had failed to find it, and the discovery was reserved for him. Accordingly, it was found among the graves of the Popes in the cemetery of Saint Callistus, and was translated to the Church of Cecilia in the Trastevere.

When Saladin seized upon Jerusalem, in 1187, the inhabitants collected in four large ivory coffers all the relics which the Holy City could boast of; but the Khalif would not allow of their removal until the Prince of Antioch had pledged himself to ransom them for a sum of fifty-two thousand besants. At the expiration of the time agreed upon, the Prince could not find the money, which was advanced, however, by our Richard Cœur de Lion, in order to save the honour of Christians. When the Latins carried Constantinople by assault, in 1204, the ecclesiastics who had taken part in the Crusade swept it nearly clean of its sacred memorials, employing sometimes stratagem, and sometimes actual violence. Gunther, in his "Historia Constantinopolitana," tells us how Martin, abbot of a monastery near Basil, deprived a Greek monk, under a menace of death, of a fragment of the true Cross, the bones of Saint John Baptist, and an arm of Saint James.

Gibbon relates with, as might be expected, a good deal of unction, the negotiations between Baldwin the Second, Emperor of Constantinople, and Louis the Ninth, of France, for the sale and purchase of the Holy Crown of Thorns, which was preserved at Constantinople in the Imperial chapel. In the absence of the Emperor, his barons, to meet the necessities of the State, had mortgaged it for a sum of thirteen thousand one hundred and thirty-four pieces of gold. They had failed to pay up their debt when demanded, and a wealthy Venetian, Nicholas Querini, undertook to satisfy their creditors on condition that

the relic should be lodged at Venice, to become his absolute property if not redeemed within a stipulated time. In these circumstances, the Emperor endeavoured to make better terms with Saint Louis. "Yet the negotiation was attended with some delicacy. In the purchase of relics, the saint would have started at the guilt of simony; but if the mode of expression were changed, he might lawfully repay the debt, accept the gift, and acknowledge the obligation. His ambassadors, the Dominicans, were despatched to Venice to redeem and receive the holy crown. . . . The reluctant Venetians yielded to justice and power; the Emperor Frederick granted a free and honourable passage; the Court of France advanced as far as Troyes in Champagne, to meet with devotion this inestimable relic; it was borne in triumph through Paris by the King himself, barefoot, and in his shirt; and a free gift of ten thousand marks of silver reconciled Baldwin to his loss." Indeed, he was so elated by the commercial success of the transaction as eagerly to enter upon another of the same kind; and for a satisfactory solatium he disposed of a large portion of the true Cross, of the baby-linen of the infant Jesus, of the lance, the chain, and the sponge of His passion, of the rod of Moses, and part of the skull of Saint John the Baptist. To receive these inestimable treasures Saint Louis built the Sainte Chapelle of Paris, at a cost of twenty thousand marks.

It is impossible not to admire, while we smile at, the simple faith of Saint Louis in accepting as authentic these diversified relics. There was no proof, for instance, of the genuineness of the Crown of Thorns, nor was any reasonable proof forthcoming. The Roman Church endeavoured to silence scepticism by pointing to the miracles it wrought; and as late as 1656 a sacred prickle from it touched and healed, it was said, an inveterate ulcer on the person of the niece of the justly celebrated Pascal, in the presence of Arnauld, Nicole, and Pascal himself. But what was then accepted as a miracle we now understand to have been nothing more than the action of the imagination—the impression produced on a nervous temperament—and are able to explain on physiological grounds. More satisfactory evidence of authenticity would now be required by a generation which reserves its credulity for the statements of speculators and the promises of politicians.

Mahomet the Second, after the capture of

Constantinople, collected with great care all the relics then existing in the city, and deposited them with his private treasure. Many of the Latin princes offered him large sums for those they most affected; and this new species of traffic proved very profitable to the Sultan; though, as Lebrun says, it may reasonably be assumed that it gave rise to colossal frauds, and led to the wholesale diffusion through Christendom of manufactured articles. He did not dispose of all, however; for when the proscribed brother of Bajazet the Second sought an asylum in France, he endeavoured to secure the good will of Charles the Eighth by offering to deposit with him "all the relics of God, our Creator, the Apostles, and the male and female saints", which his late father, Mahomet, had found at Constantinople and in other cities which he had conquered from Christendom." In 1488, the unfortunate Prince having been transferred to the custody of Innocent the Eighth, the Sultan sought to bribe the Pope into delivering him up by various presents, including "the iron head of the lance which pierced our Lord's side."

In the tenth century the "invention," that is, the discovery of remarkable relics assumed astounding proportions. The superstitious were gratified by the exhumation of one of our Lord's sandals at Saint Julien in Anjou, part of the rod of Moses at Sens, and a head of Saint John the Baptist at Saint Jean d'Angely. I say "a" head, because the church of Saint Sylvester in Capite at Rome boasted of the same treasure. At Vendôme the astonished pilgrim was shown one of the tears shed by the Saviour over Lazarus, which an angel had caught and bottled and given to Saint Mary Magdalene! The discoveries went far back into the Old Testament history, including hairs of Noah's beard and relics of Abraham; and as they drew vast crowds of pilgrims to the churches or monasteries possessing them, and became sources of continuous income, the Church did nothing to discourage the superstition.

The "invention" of the Holy Lance at Antioch (1098) is one of the grossest impostures recorded in history. The Crusaders, in their defence of the great Syrian seaport, had undergone a series of severe disasters; their hearts had failed them, and retreat and ruin were impending, when a Marseillais priest, named Bartholemey, presented himself before the Latin chiefs and announced that Saint

Andrew had thrice appeared to him in his sleep, and threatened him with a dreadful punishment if he did not make known the commands of Heaven. "At Antioch," said the Apostle, "near the high altar, in the church of my brother Saint Peter, is concealed the iron head of the lance which pierced our Redeemer's side. In three days that instrument of eternal, and even temporal salvation will be revealed to His disciples. Search and ye shall find; bear it aloft in battle; and that mystic weapon shall penetrate the souls of the unbelievers." Whether the monk acted in concert with the Latin chiefs, or on his own motion, is uncertain; but his revelation was eagerly accepted, and on the third day, after due preparation by prayer and fasting, search was made for the sacred memorial. The appointed place was found, the ground was opened, and the workmen dug to the depth of twelve feet, but in vain. At eventide, however, Barthelemy, barefooted, and in his shirt, descended into the excavation, when, in the darkness, he contrived to secrete and deposit the head of a Saracen spear. Next day, amid exclamations of rapture, the Holy Lance was drawn from its recess, wrapped in a veil of silk and gold, and exposed to the adoration of the Crusaders, who, fired with a strenuous enthusiasm by so miraculous a pledge of victory, attacked the Saracens with a vehemence that carried all before it. When men's minds grew cooler, and they examined into the particulars of Barthelemy's bold procedure, its fraudulent character was generally acknowledged. The too ingenuous priest attempted to vindicate his innocence by undergoing the ordeal by fire, but was so badly burned that he died on the following day, and the Holy Lance vanished in contempt and oblivion. Yet the revelation of Antioch was revived by succeeding historians; and such is the progress of credulity "that miracles, most doubtful on the spot and at the moment, will be received with implicit faith at a convenient distance of time and space."

Frequent and bitter were the disputes which arose as to the authenticity of relics. Thus, six places contended for the honour of possessing the real "seamless coat"—Moscow, Saint John Lateran, the Church of Sainte-Martinelle, Rome, Trèves, and Argenteuil. The two last are the most celebrated. To the "Holy Coat of Trèves," which just now is an object of interest to thousands, a curious history attaches. In

the time of the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, Trèves was the capital of Belgic Gaul. The Empress converted her palace into a cathedral, which she endowed with this precious relic. It was regarded with such jealous care that its exhibition took place only at rare intervals and on special occasions; and by degrees a belief grew up that it had disappeared. In 1844, however, the Archbishop Arnoldi announced a centenary jubilee, at which the Holy Coat was to be shown. The announcement drew immense crowds of pilgrims, so that Trèves was the scene of an excitement which recalled the excesses of mediæval fanaticism. The cathedral was thronged throughout the day with worshippers, who gazed reverently at the relic, made an oblation, and passed on their way. This revival of a superstitious practice drew a vigorous protest from Johann Ronge, the leader of the reforming clergy of Germany, or Old Catholics, as they were afterwards called; but the German Governments took alarm at the movement and Ronge was obliged to seek refuge in England. The events of the recent pilgrimage will be fresh in the minds of my readers, and need not be dwelt on here.

The so-called seamless coat is a loose garment, with short wide sleeves, of coarse material, and dark brown in colour. It measures from the extremity of each sleeve, five feet five inches, and from the collar to the lowermost edge five feet two inches. The stains upon it are reported to be those of the Saviour's blood.

The Holy Lance was another relic of which there were several copies: one at the Sainte Chapelle, in Paris; one at Nuremberg; another at the Abbey of Montdieu, in Champagne; a fourth at the Abbey of La Tenaille, in Saintonge; a fifth at Moscow, and so on.

The monks of Saint Emmeran, at Ratibon, disputed with the famous French Abbey of Saint Denys the possession of its patron's body, but in the eleventh century the dispute was decided in favour of the latter. The body of Saint Gregory the Great was believed once to be in Saint Peter's at Rome, and to have been secretly removed to Saint Médard's at Soissons; while three places displayed his head—Sens, Constance, and Torres Novas. The monks of Monte Cassino would not allow that the remains translated to Fleury were those of Saint Benedict, and were supported by Pope Urban the Second; Glastonbury contended

with Canterbury for the real Saint Dunstan, and the contention was not settled until Archbishop Warham's time, when he gave his decision in favour of his archiepiscopal city; and both Gresen and Prague claimed to possess the body of Saint Adalbert, the apostle of Prussia.

There is a lively story of a feud between two cities which broke out on the death of Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours, the good Bishop who shared his cloak with a poor naked mendicant whom he found half dead with cold at the gate of Amiens. This cloak, miraculously preserved, became one of the most valued relics of France, and when borne before the French Kings in battle was a pledge of certain victory. The Canons of Saint Martin of Tours and Saint Gratian carried on a law-suit for sixty years about a sleeve of this cloak (*chape*, in French, hence *chapelle*, *chapel*, *chaplain*), both parties claiming it as their property. The Count de Laroche-foucauld terminated the strife by sacrilegiously committing the relic to the flames.

Now it so happened that Saint Martin drew his last breath in the village of Candes, at the meeting of the waters of the Vienne and the Loire. Wherefore a bitter altercation arose between the men of Poitiers and the men of Tours. The Poitevins said: "He is a monk of ours, he has been our Abbé; we therefore demand that his body shall be handed over to us. It must suffice for you that while he was a living bishop you enjoyed his utterances, his benedictions, and his miracles." The Tourangeaux replied: "If you contend that his miracles should satisfy us, remember that while he was among you he worked more than he did while here. For in your city he restored two dead men to life, while here he resuscitated only one; and as he himself said, his power was greater before than it was after he became a Bishop. It is therefore only just that what he failed to do for us during his lifetime he should do after his death."

While they were thus discoursing, night came on. The saint's body lay in his own house, guarded by the two antagonistic forces. The gates having been barred and bolted, the Poitevins determined on carrying it off by force on the following morning; but Providence would not allow the city of Tours to be deprived of its patron-saint. At midnight, the Poitevins were overwhelmed with sleep; not one of all their number could lift his heavy eyelids. The Tourangeaux thereupon seized the

saint's body. Some lowered it from the window, others received it outside. It was placed on board a boat, and all rowed down the Vienne. When they passed into the Loire they steered towards Tours, chanting psalms. The sound of their voices awakened the Poitevins, who, ashamed to have been so easily tricked by the men of Tours, returned home in haste.

Among relics of a painfully grotesque character I may mention: a morsel of the grilled flesh of Saint Lawrence, who, as everybody knows, was roasted to death upon a gridiron over a slow fire; the bones of Moses; the sigh which Saint Joseph heaved when he was splitting wood; the tears of our Lord, his letters, his different footprints; feathers from the wings of the archangels Gabriel and Saint Michael. When the Crusaders returned from the Holy Land in 1099, they were loaded with relics of holy personages who had previously been unknown in the West. Bohemond, one of their leaders, divided between Anselm and certain churches a dozen hairs, which the patriarch of Antioch had given him with the assurance that the blessed Virgin plucked them from her head as she stood—*Mater Dolorosa*—by the Cross.

But the most curious are those which come down direct from above; for in this respect the Christian Paradise seems to have been as lavish as the ancient Olympus. In several of the chroniclers, and particularly in Matthew Paris, one finds tolerably frequent allusion to the correspondence which the Almighty, His Divine Son, the Virgin, or the Saints deigned to carry on with men. "In 1109," writes the monk of St. Albans, "much was said about a famous letter reported to have fallen from the sky into the hands of a prelate while celebrating mass, and the object of which was to appease the always increasing disquietudes of the Romans." This letter, which contained nothing but a prophecy in the style of Merlin, simple-minded Matthew reproduces under the year 1226, with the information that it was found in a hermit's psalter, at the place of the psalm "Exurgat Deus."

Again, in 1230, he writes: "There might be seen at Jerusalem a letter which descended from Heaven over the altar of Saint Simeon at Golgotha. It was suspended in the air, and they who saw it prostrated themselves and prayed, for three days and three nights, the Lord of Mercy to mani-

fest to them His will. The third day, at the third hour, Archbishop Zacharias and the patriarch rose from their knees, and stretched over the holy altar a cloth in which they received the sacred missive."

In this letter, the design of which was to prescribe anew the observation of holy days, and especially of Sunday, the Almighty thus expressed Himself : "I, your God, if you do not obey My commandments, swear to you, by My holy seat and by My throne, and by the knights who guard it, I will send you no other letter, but I will open the heavens, and instead of rain will pour down upon you stones, and pieces of wood, and boiling water. . . . I will send against you beasts with the head of a lion, the hair of a woman, and a camel's tail, and they shall devour your flesh." The remainder of the letter is in the same style of grotesque profanity.

Sometimes a miraculous origin has been attributed to relics through an accidental mistake. After the return of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the patriarch of Jerusalem sent him, "per angelos suas"—his own angels or messengers—a horse, a staff, and a tunic of cloth of gold, which David dedicated on the altar of his cathedral church. The twofold meaning of the word "angelos" led, at a later date, to a belief that these gifts were of celestial origin. We meet in history with a host of legends which, like this, are founded upon equivocal words or phrases.

It was very generally believed that genuine relics could not be destroyed by fire; and this belief explains the second canon adopted by the Council of Saragossa, that all relics found among the Arians should be carried to the Bishops, and subjected to the ordeal of fire. As this test, however, was hazardous for good as well as bad relics, it was very seldom adopted.

In all generations persons of an incredulous turn of mind have existed; and as such persons might have had a fancy for personally investigating the authenticity of some of the memorials held up to their veneration, the monks put into circulation various stories calculated to terrify even the most daring unbelievers. "The body of the blessed martyr, Saint Edmund," says Guibert de Nogent, "permitted no one to approach it. An Abbé of the monastery where this relic was preserved, who was recently living, desired to verify the report that the head of this saint, who

was martyred by decapitation, had been miraculously joined to his body. He and his chaplain fasted for several days, and then, having uncovered the body, one dragged it by the head, and the other by the heels, to see if the former would come away from the trunk ('si le chef se détacherait du tronc'). Their efforts were useless; but their hands remained stricken with permanent paralysis."

In course of time the saints were preferred by the superstitious to God Himself, and received more homage than the three Persons of the Trinity. It is recorded that one year, when no offering was made at the high altar, and only four pounds one shilling and eightpence at the Virgin's, the oblations at the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket amounted to nine hundred and fifty pounds six shillings and threepence. As Canon Jenkins remarks, the relics of Becket made Canterbury "a centre of the religious life of the day, second to no other place of pilgrimage and devotion;" and gifts and offerings of whose value the splendour of the shrine itself, as Erasmus has described it, was a very significant symbol, gave proof of the hold which the Becket cultus had upon every class, from Royalty downwards.

At different dates relics of recent discovery—or "invention"—came into vogue. For instance, the "Veronica" (*verum icon*), a cloth or handkerchief on which our Lord miraculously impressed His countenance when on His way to Calvary, was first exhibited at Rome about 1011. The legend was that a Saint Veronica had handed the cloth to the Saviour; and it was reported to have been brought into Italy for the cure of the Emperor Tiberius, when suffering from leprosy! One of the stories respecting it is, that it warned Innocent the Third of his approaching death by turning upside down in a procession. The "Holy Dish" (*sacro catino*), "vas coloris viridissimi," was brought by the Genoese from Cesarea in 1101, and is still preserved in the Duomo at Genoa. It was venerated as having been used at the Last Supper, and the credulous believed it to be of emerald, though it was really of green glass.

Cologne boasted of possessing the bodies of the Three Kings of the East, which were supposed to have been presented by the Empress Helen to Eustorgius, Archbishop of Milan, and were transferred from Milan to his own cathedral by Reginald, Archbishop of Cologne, in 1162; and those of

Saint Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins, who were martyred by the Huns at Cologne, according to one of the ecclesiastical fabulists in 453. In 1156, when affairs were not prospering for the Church at Cologne, and some miraculous event was very much needed, a number of bodies were opportunely discovered and sent to Saint Elizabeth of Sclönea, who fixed the martyrdom of the virgin company in 238, and had visions of their celestial glory. The extravagant number, "eleven thousand," is now generally referred to a misreading of an old inscription, "XI. M. V." (xi martyres virgines), as "undecim millia virginum."

Late in the eleventh century, Guibert de Nogent-sans-Couci wrote a tractate "De Pignoribus Sanctorum" (On the Relics of Saints), provoked thereto by the audacity with which the monks of Saint Médard's, at Soissons, displayed a pretended tooth of our Lord. With refreshing good sense, he denies the genuineness of such relics of the Saviour; strongly censures the practice of profaning the graves of the saints, and enshrining their remains in gold and silver receptacles; and frankly exposes the disgraceful artifices of the relic-mongers. As an instance of their effrontery, he mentions that, on one occasion, while he stood listening to a sermon, the preacher pointed to him as being able to confirm the genuineness of some crusts of bread, brought, it was pretended, from our Lord's own table. He confesses, however, that though he was shocked at its utterance, he allowed the falsehood to pass uncontradicted. Guibert also tells a story which shows that the sanctity of relics was sometimes disregarded. It was then the custom to hawk about those of special value from place to place, in order to stimulate the gifts of the faithful. Certain priests of the Church of Laon ventured to cross to England with their treasures, consisting of pieces of the Blessed Virgin's petticoat, of the sponge used by our Lord at Calvary, and of the True Cross. In one town they were particularly successful, collecting numerous and costly offerings. An Englishman, who was standing in front of the church where they were "on view," said to a companion :

"Come! let us have a drink."

"I have no money," rejoined the other.

"I will make sure of some," exclaimed the first speaker.

"How so?"

"I have observed," said the other, "that

these priests, by dint of their lies and inventions, have extracted large sums of money from the credulous. I intend that, in one way or another, they shall pay for our good cheer."

Thus speaking, he passed into the church, and while affecting to kiss the relics most reverently, contrived to press his lips on the coins heaped up in front of them, and to take into his mouth a good haul. Then, retiring, he joined his companion.

"Now for a drink! I have more cash than would suffice to make both of us drunk."

"How on earth did you manage it, when, only a few minutes ago, you hadn't a penny to your name?"

"I had the pluck," replied the rascal, "to take up a mouthful of the large sums given to yonder impostors."

"It was wrong of you," said his comrade, "to rob the saints."

"Hush, hold your tongue," whispered the offender, "and let us be off to the nearest inn."

As late, however, as the fifteenth century the rule of relic-worship prevailed. At the Council of Basle, in 1439, the Cardinal of Arles, in order to invest the proceedings with exceptional solemnity, caused all the most famous relics in the city to be collected, and after they had been carried in procession through the streets, to be placed on the vacant seats; and so great was the effect of this peculiar device, that when the invocation of the Holy Spirit was pronounced, the whole assembly burst into tears.

When Louis the Eleventh of France—the strange compound of crime, craft, cowardice, daring, superstition and devotion, so vividly portrayed by Scott in "Quentin Durward"—was seized with his last illness and tortured by remorse, he gathered around him all the holiest relics procurable, including the holy vial, which had never before been removed from Reims since the time (as was believed) of Clovis. Pope Sextus sent him a numerous collection from Rome; so numerous that the Roman ecclesiastics complained of the extent to which he was denuding the city of its treasures. The Pope replied, however, that he had given away but little, and that the King of France had deserved well of the Church.

Almost the last relic of which we hear as imported into Europe was that which the Sultan Bajazet, in May, 1492, sent as a present to Pope Innocent the Eighth—the head of the lance which had pierced the

Saviour's side. We have already heard of this relic as existing at Paris, Nuremberg, and other places; but this was not a fact which troubled the minds of the Pope and his Consistory. To this day the Sultanic gift is revered as one of the four chief relics of Saint Peter's Church.

What has become of all those relics, and of the jewel-incrusted caskets, reliquaries, and shrines in which they were preserved? It is certain that only a limited number are now extant. Well, the greater portion were swept away in the wars which at various epochs have devastated the face of Christendom, and more particularly, in the great wars of the Revolution. In England very few survived the iconoclasticism of the Reformation. Rome, of course, still retains several famous memorials; Cologne has its own peculiar property; and Holy Coats still exist both at Trèves and Argenteuil. Naples still boasts of the blood of Saint Januarius; Loretto of its Santa Casa or Holy House, carried by angels into Dalmatia from Galilee, in 1291, and brought to Loretto a few years afterwards; and fragments of the True Cross are exhibited in many places. It may safely be asserted, however, that Relic-Worship has seen its palmy days and will never again impose, to any considerable extent, on the conscience of mankind.

THE FIRST HOT WORD.

The first hot word ; ah ! shun it, dear ;
Dread it with full and wholesome fear.
Close quivering lips, veil flashing eyes,
Force faltering tongue to soft replies,
Hushed, as if subtle foes were near.

Since neither the repentant tear,
Or earnest vow, or hope sincere,
Can ever fully exorcise
The first hot word,

The storm that sweeps the evening skies
May pass, and morning's sun arise
In the blue heavens serene and clear ;
But the sweet bud we sought to rear,
Crushed in the verdant grass it lies ;
So hardly life's best hope it tries,
The first hot word.

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE OF MR. LUKE VENABLES.

[Note by Henry Keene-Adams, Esq., M.B., M.R.C.S. The manuscript of which the following pages are a faithful transcript, was found by me under circumstances which will become apparent during the progress of the narrative. I found the record an interesting one; but then I looked at it chiefly from a professional point of view. The reader may be all the more likely to agree with me if I refrain from further preface. The statement has no formal heading.]

My physician has requested me to put in writing a short and simple account of

my experience. This he has desired me to do, partly to satisfy his own curiosity, which, like that of a good many other people, was considerably exercised on the subject, and partly to find some occupation for me. I have no objection to do what he asks. I shall neither add any theories or opinions of my own, nor conceal any part of what actually occurred. If I devote a few lines to describing my manner of life, it is only that the strange facts which I have to set down may be more readily understood.

I wish to say at the outset, that I am not, and never have been a spiritualist; nor a believer in mesmerism, animal magnetism, odic force, or anything of that sort. My experience has no relation to delusions of that kind. Nor am I in any way superstitious. Some of the phenomena which have come under my notice would probably have excited in most people superstitious terrors. It was not so with me. I remained throughout completely master of myself, for the simple reason that I knew perfectly well that these phenomena were due to natural causes, and were capable of explanation according to undiscovered but simple natural laws.

I admit, however, that I have all my life been something of a recluse. Left an orphan at a very early age, I was brought up by an uncle; or rather he permitted me to occupy one or two rooms in the great dreary house in which he lived. As soon as I left the nursery, my education was entrusted to the curate of the parish, an excellent man, a scholar, and a gentleman, but one who was emphatically not a man of the world, and therefore, perhaps, not the best person to be the sole companion of a shy and sensitive creature like myself. I have since thought that it would have been better had I been sent to school. However, I lived at Garston Hall until I was five-and-twenty years of age; and then, some tiresome legal formalities (including sundry interviews with high functionaries) having been concluded, my uncle put me in possession of my house at St. Aidan's (to which I intend returning as soon as this manuscript is finished); handed me a bundle of bonds, vouchers, and the like, together with a banker's pass-book and a cheque-book; requested me to sign my name at the foot of a deed called a Release; shook hands with me, and wished me good-day, exactly as if I had been a visitor who had come down to

the Hall on business and had stayed overnight.

My pride, more than my affections, was hurt at this cool conduct ; but I said nothing, and betook myself at once to my new home.

St. Aidan's, as everybody knows, is a watering-place on the coast of the East Riding of Yorkshire, which is beginning to be fashionable. My house, absurdly called The Dingle, lay a mile and a half to the north of the town, not far from the sea-shore. It was small, old, and gloomy, being closely surrounded by trees. I soon got used to it, however ; and I refused to listen to those who said that I ought to have the woods thinned, so as to admit more light and air to my dwelling.

The sombre appearance of the place suited my idiosyncrasy, and accorded with my habit of mind, which always had a tendency to melancholy. I loved, too, to wander under the dark shade of the trees on a summer noon, or, better still, to sit by my parlour fire and hear them moaning and shrieking like creatures in pain, through a long winter's evening.

At The Dingle, my sole companion was an old woman, who acted as housekeeper and factotum. A gardener came now and then. The stables were shut up and deserted. My time was occupied in reading, chiefly books on psychology and physiology, and in the dangerous but delightful amusement of day-dream or reverie. Many a time have I spent hours in my little study, or in summer sitting on a bench in my old-fashioned garden, in a state of semi-unconsciousness, while my fancy led me by the hand and took me beyond the rocky barrier which separates this dull world of ours from "faeryland forlorn."

Among a number of miscellaneous volumes I had sent to me, I lighted upon a copy of a book, famous, I believe, in its day, though now but little esteemed—Abercromby on The Intellectual Powers. The good old doctor there discusses some cases of the curious nervous disease which produces spectral illusions. In one case, I remember, the patient was haunted by the apparition of a little old woman in a red cloak ; in another the imaginary ghost took the form of a dog which so closely resembled a real animal, that the gentleman to whom it belonged was sometimes obliged to touch it with his stick, in order to satisfy himself that it was not a living and breathing animal.

About this time I also came upon a

curious tale of a portrait-painter, who possessed the faculty of imagination in so strong a degree, that he did not need to trouble his sitters to remain in his studio more than half an hour. After gazing at the face and form of his visitor for that length of time, putting a line or two on the canvas as he did so, he could conjure up that person's appearance at will, and complete the portrait at his ease, working from the imaginary form which his memory supplied.

I well remember the time when it first occurred to me to try whether such a power could not be cultivated. It was the night after a sultry August day. The moonlight streamed on the tangled shrubs and grass-grown walks of the garden, as I sat there enjoying the cool night air. I was in a curiously excited, restless state of mind. I had been paying a necessary visit that day to the neighbouring town of St. Aidan's—a thing I always hated doing, especially in the summer, when the streets were swarming with visitors. I hurried through these crowds of well-dressed, self-sufficient, foolish, staring people ; and did not think myself safe from them till I had reached the stile leading to my own fields. I generally felt restless and ill at ease after one of these visits to the town ; but on that evening of which I speak, I had a special cause for excitement.

Among other places, I had called at a book-seller's, and on leaving the shop I met face to face in the doorway a girl—a girl of surpassing grace and beauty. A commonplace incident, truly ; but it was not commonplace to me. I stood aside to let her pass, and she thanked me with a smile—ah ! what sunlight on an April morning could seem so bright ? Her hair and eyebrows were dark, but her complexion was pure white. She was rather thin. The colour of her eyes—I do not know.

After leaving the shop I felt that I must see her once more. Yielding to the impulse, I went back to the shop. She was still there, and to my inward disgust the tradesman, recognising in me a regular customer, left her and came over to the other side of the shop to know what I wanted. I did not dare to do more than steal a hasty glance at the lady's face ; but in that instant I had engraved her features on my memory. After I left the shop for the second time her face haunted me. I had never seen it before, and I was quite aware that there was but a small probability that I would ever see it again ;

yet I knew I had it for a possession as long as I should live. I felt that this girl belonged to me, in a sense, in virtue of the homage I paid her.

As I sat in the moonlit garden, it occurred to me to try whether I could not imitate the artist of whom I had read, and coax my eyes to recall the form and lineaments of the girl whose image filled my mind. I summoned up all my powers, fixed my gaze on the vacant space at the end of the bench on which I was sitting, and tried to imagine that she was actually seated there. I set myself to picture the pale face, the dusky hair, the pose of the head and neck. There, I said to myself, her arm would rest on the elbow of the garden-seat, there her dress—

It came!

Suddenly, unexpectedly, as if my efforts at recalling and picturing the image had nothing to do with it, the sweet vision was before my eyes!

For some minutes I sat silent, revelling in the possession of my treasure, afraid to speak or move, lest the phantom should fade away for ever. I was well aware that what I saw was purely the creation of my own fancy, a spectral illusion like those mentioned by Dr. Abercromby. But it was delightful to have it by me. The likeness to the original was perfect. The image almost seemed as if it would move and speak, and I liked to fancy that it actually did, but for the most part it remained perfectly still.

As I sat there entranced, I heard on the gravel the footsteps of my housekeeper, who was bringing me my second supply of tea—a beverage of which I am very fond.

I allowed her to approach in silence, marking, in the meantime, the wonderful solidity and lifelikeness, as well as the grace, of the apparition I had conjured up for my companion. When the old dame drew near, I placed my elbows on my knees, and dropped my head in my hands, as if I were half asleep.

"Tea, Morrison?" I said, without looking up; "offer some to the lady."

"The lady, sir? What lady?"

"Why, here—oh, I suppose I must have been dreaming."

Mrs. Morrison was used to my little eccentricities, and did not trouble herself to reply. But I knew now that my new companion was invisible to all but myself, that it was no ghost that haunted me, but a simple natural illusion. To my chagrin, however, when I looked for it once more it

had vanished. One could have fancied that my gentle visitant had taken offence at hearing herself thus spoken of—doubted, put to the test as it were—and had chosen voluntarily to withdraw herself.

But many times after this the vision of this pale, sweet-faced girl came to cheer my loneliness; I grew to expect her appearance, and even began to hold conversation with her.

It was towards the end of the month that I met this lady in the flesh for the second time. I was walking along the cliff, as I often did at an hour when the bustling noisy population of St. Aidan's were otherwise engaged, when I heard a faint cry from the beach below. Looking over the edge, I saw that the tide had swept over what was a bank of dry gravel an hour before, and had now drawn near the foot of the cliff, and in the narrow space between the water and the rocks a girl was sitting with a folded easel and artist's umbrella beside her. Even at that distance I knew her.

I found a way down the cliffs; a way which she managed to climb, with my help. During those precious minutes she was mine, not in fancy alone, but in flesh and blood. When we reached St. Aidan's we were already friends. Her name, she told me, was Ida. I forgot the surname—it is of no consequence.

From that time I lived only in the expectation of meeting her again, and I did meet her often. I supposed that her friends did not object, but I never troubled myself about them.

All those happy weeks that came to us ere the summer ended, I wooed Ida for my bride. During our long conversations I opened my mind and my heart to her—told her, even, that I could conjure up her image at will.

"Nay, more," I said to her one day, "I can imagine that I see an image of myself."

"Of yourself!" she echoed. "How perfectly horrible!"

"Not at all," I replied, "I think it most interesting."

"Interesting!—yes, in a way. But so eerie, so uncanny. I should die of fright if such a thing should happen to me."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "Don't you see a phantom of yourself every time you look into a mirror? The apparitions I am telling you of are purely creations of the brain, produced by the imagination acting as a stimulus to the optic nerves. They are as far removed from 'the supernatural,'

to use the ordinary foolish term, as your own image reflected in a looking-glass."

"I know—of course," said Ida; "but it seems very odd, very. I don't want to think of such things;" adding, a moment afterwards: "How did you manage to produce such a spectre? Were you not afraid?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I did feel rather like Frankenstein for a moment or two," I replied; "but that feeling soon wore off. You see I have long been accustomed to argue and dispute with myself as with a separate being. I often talk to myself."

"A very bad habit," interrupted Ida.

"A very innocent one," I replied. "I like to amuse myself by pitting the lower part of my being against the higher, to see which will win."

"Which does win?" she asked.

"Oh, sometimes one, sometimes the other. Sometimes I subdue my inclinations; sometimes my inclination—my inferior will as the schoolmen call it—masters me. Well, it occurred to me one day while I was holding an argument with myself, that I might try to project an image of myself into the air so that I might seem to be disputing with a real person. I got a mirror and persisted in thinking that I saw the reflection transferred from it—"

"Oh, Luke," she cried, "stop! It seems so strange; almost wicked!"

I laughed.

"You don't seem to comprehend that it is all a trick, a weakness, probably, of one of the nerves leading to the eye, or perhaps of that part of the brain through which we see. In my case, an unusual excitement of the nerve may produce this result. It may be an unusual phenomenon, but it is a perfectly natural one."

"I'm glad I cannot see myself except in a looking-glass!" cried Ida.

"It was some time," I continued, "before I succeeded in getting a spectral illusion of the kind I wanted; but at length one night, after taking a large quantity of strong tea, I did find that I could see a dim and shadowy figure resembling myself seated opposite to me. Now I can call it up whenever I will; and sometimes—sometimes it visits me even when I do not really desire its presence."

"Perhaps you really do desire it in spite of yourself," said Ida; and I was startled by the truth of the remark.

"I dare say you are right," I replied.

"So you have a dual self?"

"It almost seems so; for in all our discussions and contests I take, of course, the better part—the side of my superior nature. This spectral illusion—this nothing, this figment of my brain and nerves, is the shadowy impersonation of my lower nature."

"Does it ever seem to speak?" asked my companion, in an awestruck whisper.

"I speak for it," I replied. I did not care to add that I had sometimes fancied—it was the purest fancy, of course—that I heard a word or two, or a laugh, in a tone that seemed an echo of my own.

"And—does it move?"

"I am not sure that it cannot move. Of course it altogether depends on whether I wish to imagine it moving or at rest; but generally, like the image of yourself, when I see it, it is at rest."

At this point, Ida called for my judgement upon a blue and brown section of paint on her canvas, which, from the surroundings, I thought was intended to represent either a fragment of jelly-fish or a sunset; and our conversation took another direction.

For some reason, which I never fully understood, Ida did not seem to care that I should present myself at the house of her aunt (a wealthy widow, I believe), with whom she lived. We continued, after our engagement, to meet either on the cliffs or on some retired spot on the beach; regularly, at every interview, appointing a time and place for our next meeting.

One Tuesday evening—it was a wintry night towards the end of November—I received a note from Ida. I knew it must be from her, though I had never seen her handwriting before. Who else was there to write to me? We had not met for two days; and I was looking forward, with the keenest delight, to seeing her on the morrow. My disappointment, therefore, was bitter, when, eagerly opening her letter, I found that it contained nothing but a trivial excuse for not keeping our tryst on the following day. I had carried my letter into the garden, so that I might read it in perfect seclusion; and I paced the sombre walk between the garden and the plantation in a mood of jealous irritation for some minutes. When I had at length reasoned myself out of this temper, I fell into a state of deep dejection. It was in vain that I told myself that the incident meant nothing; a foreboding of evil filled my heart.

I thought of the proverbial fickleness of the sex; and for the time I gave myself up to believe the worst of them.

"But Ida—she is different," whispered my good angel in my ear.

My only answer to the appeal was a low mocking laugh—a laugh which was immediately echoed from the wood beside which I was walking. For the moment I was thrilled with superstitious dread. The sound was a facsimile, a replica of my own laugh. But I soon recovered myself. Surely, I said to myself, it would be odd if there were such a thing as an aural as well as an optical illusion! Could one imagine sounds till one actually heard them? The thing was evidently possible. I had been deceived by a figment of my own morbid fancy in the world of sound, as I habitually allowed or compelled my fancy to deceive me in the realm of sight. Yet I peered among the trees to see whether I could discover any one who might have been laughing at or with me; and—doubtless it was purely a trick of the imagination—it seemed to me that I could catch sight of a dim, unsubstantial form, strangely resembling my own outward appearance, gliding from shadow to shadow among the trees.

On the following day my humour led me to go as usual to the place where I had been in the habit of meeting Ida. It was a melancholy visit. Every rock, every bush, spoke to me of her. I fled from the spot, not caring which direction I took. I had reached a lonely part of the sea-shore, when sharply turning a rocky promontory, I came upon Ida face to face.

She was not alone. A man was with her—a man tall, and strong, and handsome—but I did not waste a second look upon him. My eyes were fixed on the girl, who clung with both hands to her companion's arm. There must have been something strange and wild in my looks, for Ida neither smiled nor bowed. She only gazed at me with staring, frightened eyes, and I did not accost her.

With feverish impatience I waited for our next meeting. It came; and the first moments I spent with Ida told me that I had lost her. Even now I do not dare to recall the anguish that pierced my heart, as she told me, with an affectation of carelessness, that she wished to break off our engagement. She had acted hastily, she said, and inconsiderately. We were not well suited for each other—I would

soon find some one more worthy of me than she was—and so forth.

"Who was that man I met walking with you two days ago?" I asked, sternly. She turned pale, and made no reply.

"Your new sweetheart? Or perhaps an old one?"

Her pallor gave way to an indignant blush. I did not listen to what she said in answer. I saw that I was right. I had been fooled—taken up as one takes up a novel to while away an idle hour with it, and then throw it away. Now that she had no more occasion for me I was dropped, like a thing of no value. What did this girl, happy in her new conquest, care for my broken heart?

When I left her I felt like a soul that had been turned away from the gate of Paradise. I could not rest. I continually haunted the shore and the cliffs, that I might catch a passing glimpse of her, to assuage the thirst that raged within me. Often I saw her—the same man always by her side.

Weeks passed; and winter succeeded to summer almost at a bound. Some change must have occurred in the arrangements of the household of which Ida was a member. I saw her no more openly on the sands; but constant watching made me aware that she still met her new lover in secret—met him, good heavens! in the very spot which had been sacred to our love.

It was at this time that the idea of revenging myself on my faithless love first entered my brain. It had not occurred to me before. Then I could only suffer; now I longed to make her suffer too.

I knew it; and I hated myself, hated and despised myself, for entertaining the wish; yet I cherished it.

One night, after waiting long in the chill November mist that I might see the flutter of her dress as she passed swiftly homeward from the trysting-place, the black thought came into my mind—suppose I were to watch for her as she passes the corner of the cliffs, clasp her in my arms, and leap over the precipice? That would be sweet—sweet to know that we died together, that she should never live to be another's bride!

I revelled in the thought for a few moments. Then I put it from me. It returned. I rejected it again. It came back once more.

Three days, I knew, must pass before the lovers would meet again. I dreaded the coming of the day. The time would

be two hours after dusk. What if I should feel impelled to carry out my revenge? I determined to go to sleep until the fatal hour should be past. And to make the matter sure, I would take a dose of opium.

Going upstairs in the dim and ghostly moonlight, I threw open my bedroom window and leaned out. A silence like the silence of a sepulchre lay around me. Not a whisper of wind stirred the dark branches of the pines.

And then, suddenly, the temptation fell on me again, like a bolt from the infernal pit. I trembled, withdrew from the window, and covered my face with my hands. I tried to pray—the words would not come. I tried to sink into the attitude of prayer—my knees would not bend.

Then, springing to my feet, I resolved to master the demon that was shaking my soul. I rushed to the door, locked it, and threw the key out of the window. It fell, with a sharp clang; and I knew that it had struck against an iron garden-seat which stood in the avenue, at some little distance.

Then a new expedient occurred to me—suppose I dropped out of the window, alighted on the top of a tool-house that stood beneath, and made my way to the sea-shore? I remembered that I had clambered into the house by that way on one occasion, when I had come home unexpectedly, and had found my housekeeper gone and the house shut up. If I had come in by that way, it would be easy to go out by it.

Shutting the window with a bang, I went to my medicine cupboard, poured out a dose of laudanum, drank it off, and threw myself on the bed.

There I lay, unable to sleep. Perhaps I had taken too little of the drug. At any rate, I felt as one benumbed; and yet my fancy was morbidly alive. I began to wonder whether I was alone. I turned, and in a half-dazed state looked across toward the window. And there—merciful Heaven!—I saw sitting on the window-seat, distinct in the moonlight, the very image and figure of myself!

It was I—my second self—or rather the spectre, the optical illusion which I had often amused myself by creating. It sat with its head between its hands, just as I myself had sat, an hour before. And as I watched it, I trembled.

There was nothing surprising in the fact that my optic nerves and the delicate

organs of the eyes, excited, and not soothed to sleep, by the opium, should be capable of presenting me with an image of myself. The thing had often happened to me before; but never had I shrunk from the phantom as I shrank now. What if it should lift its head and look at me? What if it should renew the temptation I dreaded? Was that I myself, sitting with hidden face? Did I merely imagine that I was lying in bed?

When I awoke the wintry sun was sending a cold radiance through my room. I sprang up, dressed myself, and then, leaping from the window, I picked up the key of my door, with a smile at the weakness I had exhibited the night before. I felt stronger, better than I had done for some time.

The morning passed as usual. In the afternoon my housekeeper brought me my tea; and as she placed the teapot on the table I noticed that her face was big with news.

"Such a terrible thing, sir, has happened on the West Cliff! A young lady was missing from her home last night, and in the morning they found her lying at the foot of the rocks quite dead. She must have gone out alone and fallen over; but"—in terrified whisper—"some do say the police think some one pushed her over the edge."

"Ha, ha, ha!" My laughter sounded dreadful to the old woman, I dare say; but I was only yielding to the uncontrollable impulse we all have to smile at moments when levity would be indecent, and thinking, at the same moment, how odd was the coincidence in point of time between the struggle I had undergone on the preceding evening and the accident itself.

I could see, however, that my housekeeper was shocked, and I hastened to say: "Don't look so grave, Mrs. Morrison. It is very dreadful for the poor young lady, no doubt, and for her friends; but I could not help laughing at the folly of the police in imagining that some one had pushed the girl over. Who could have wished to injure her? Why, it would have been murder!"

"True enough, sir," answered Mrs. Morrison; "and to my mind any one as did it must be a devil in the shape of a man." With these words, and a rather impertinent look at me, the old woman left the room.

I felt that I must go and see the spot where she had fallen, not to see the—

I could not bear that. That must have been removed long ago. I went down at once to the sea-shore, but a crowd of people had gathered round the place, and after a hurried glance down the cliff I retired, determining to return when night had driven those idle busybodies indoors.

Having returned home, I went upstairs, and happening to go into my bedroom, I noticed that the suit of tweeds which I had worn the day before were marked all over with greenish mould. It was another curious coincidence. Had I been, by some absurd freak of fortune, accused of having caused poor Ida's death, would not some say that I had soiled my clothes by leaving my room by the window at night? They might call it, in their legal jargon, "circumstantial evidence." Ha, ha! I got a brush and made short work of the circumstantial evidence.

Night came, the moon arose, and I went down to the cliffs. I was alone. How softly the water lapped upon the stones far below! And it was here—yes, it was here. There were the marks of a struggle on that spot of ground fenced off by the police. How brightly the moon's rays lit up the dark water out there! When had I seen it shining just in that way? Not so long ago. I was waiting for some one. It was like a dream; but I could not recall it.

I went home, and slept as usual.

In the morning, when I went downstairs, a policeman met me in the hall. He followed me into the sitting-room. I sat down, and he stood opposite me, speaking of the accident which they said had happened to Ida. He seemed to think I was mixed up in it.

"What's that you have in your hand, sir?" he asked, suddenly; and darting forward, he took from me something which I had drawn from my pocket, and had been absently twining round my fingers. I looked at it without much interest, but he seemed to think it of great importance. It was only a fragment of stuff, such as women's dresses are made of. I remember Ida used to wear dresses of that sort of material; but of course it could not possibly have belonged to her or I should not have let him have it.

That very day he took me to see the magistrates, and they actually sent me to prison.

My trial has not come off yet—or rather it did come off and was postponed. I have come here to wait until the assizes come round again. It seems a long, long

time. I believe they have forgotten me, or else they have bribed the superintendent to detain me. Sometimes I think they mean to keep me here always—always—always.

But I know now who pushed my darling over the cliff, down among the cruel stones—it was that fiend in my own shape that I saw sitting by the window in the moonlight.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a hot afternoon in July, and Catherine Maidment had walked nearly two miles, but she did not look hot. She was standing under a large spreading yew-tree which grew outside a farm-house. There were two of them in the farm-house garden, and they were cut into fantastic shapes resembling enormous birds. That is to say, a hundred years before they had, perhaps, to the designer's fancy, resembled birds; but now, with the cutting and trimming of many generations of tenants of the farm, the resemblance had nearly ceased, and only grotesqueness remained. But they gave a thick, impenetrable shade, and this was the reason why Catherine Maidment had chosen the large one under which to take her stand.

Facing her, in his shirt-sleeves, with his hat off and lying on a bench which ran round the thick trunk of the tree, stood the tenant of the farm. He was a man of about fifty, with a face which at the moment expressed nothing so clearly as perplexity—the perplexity of a slow mind which is struggling to be diplomatic. He held his spud in his right hand and applied it erratically to the few weeds in the gravel path, as if to assist his thoughts, while he said, slowly :

"Well, Miss Maidment, I did say something of that sort, now I come to think of it. But I don't remember anything so clear as a fortnight bein' named between me and your brother."

"A fortnight from the thirtieth of June, he told you, Mr. Roberts," Catherine Maidment answered.

Mr. Roberts moved his spud more meditatively instead of speaking, and Miss Maidment looked at him, resting her hand

on the handle of her sunshade meanwhile. It was a small hand, but it held the carved wooden ring in a firm grasp, and though she was wearing loose soft gloves it was easy to see that its shape was firm and decided. The same decision expressed itself in her upright pose—she did not move or alter her position in the most trifling manner as she looked at Mr. Roberts and waited for him to speak again. Either something in her eyes compelled him to try, or his mind was struck with an idea which he hoped might prove useful and gain him his point, for he suddenly left off the contest he had waged with a struggling dandelion plant, and said, abruptly :

"But look at my losses, Miss Maidment! You know I lost two heifers only last month. Young and promisin', both. And this very week as we are in, I've had to sell hal' my long corn-rick at a loss. And I've had a considerable outlay this spring with extra hands I've took on. More claims than I can say, there is."

"This is doubtless very reasonable, Mr. Roberts, but it does not affect the fact that the rent is the first and most important claim, and must be met."

The curious contrast between the last words themselves and the womanly voice that spoke them, increased, instead of detracting from, their insistant emphasis. Mr. Roberts seemed to feel the emphasis, for he said, in a tone less aggressively injured and more accommodating :

"Mr. Maidment will give me time yet, perhaps?"

"He will give you until the end of this week, Mr. Roberts."

"The end of this week? It's Tuesday now, and how am I to raise that money in five days?"

"That is your own affair, Mr. Roberts. All I say is that it must be paid."

"Surely—another fortnight—or even a month, Miss Maidment? If Mr. Maidment would give me till harvest, now?"

"My brother has Mr. Stewart-Carr's interests to consider, Mr. Roberts; surely you understand this? He cannot extend the time."

Miss Maidment raised her head a little more. She had been facing the man before her steadily, all the time she spoke, but there was a little added air of firmness about this small movement which had an unconscious effect on Mr. Roberts's will. He gave up the struggle all at once, planted his spud firmly into the gravel, and said, with the air of a man who, because he is

conquered, is determined to look as if victory were his own :

"Very well, Miss Maidment. Business is business, of course. You can tell Mr. Maidment he shall have the money by Saturday. Though how I am to find it—" he added, relapsing into his former tone quickly.

But Catherine Maidment took not the smallest notice of the last words.

"By Saturday," she said. "You will not mind, Mr. Roberts, giving me a written memorandum to that effect?"

Mr. Roberts gazed at her for a moment, then, feeling confusedly both that he had not arranged things so well as he intended, and that Fate was especially hard on him in giving him Miss Maidment to cope with, turned with a gesture he intended to be taken for acquiescence, and said, brusquely:

"Will you come in the house and see my wife while I see to it, or stay out here, Miss Maidment?"

"I'd wait here, please. I must get back at once," she answered. "Another day I shall hope to come and see Mrs. Roberts."

Mr. Roberts turned, and went down the box-bordered path that led to the farmhouse. The summer afternoon sun was shining on the windows, and the bees were hard at work in the carnations and mignonette that grew on each side of the box, and in the large orange lilies which grew in a little cluster on Catherine Maidment's right hand.

There was no sound as she waited there but the low humming of the bees, and the note of a bird, which came, softened by distance, from a spinney near.

Miss Maidment listened to it for a minute, and a little smile began to break over her face—a smile of remembrance. It was the curious, monotonous note of a greenfinch, and she remembered how, as a child, she had always called it and thought of it as "a lonely bird," because its note was so much more plaintive than any other. And the thought brought back for a moment her childis' days and feelings.

But the smile faded, and she gave one short, quick sigh as Mr. Roberts came out of the house and up the gravel walk towards her again.

"Here it is, Miss Maidment," he said, as he reached her, holding out a sheet of paper. "It'll be all right, tell Mr. Maidment. Not but what my word's as good, if I'd once given it. However, there's no doubt he's right to be particular. But Mr. Stewart-Carr himself couldn't be more so."

However, that's as it should be, you're thinking."

Miss Maidment took the paper, and held out her hand.

"Good day, Mr. Roberts," she said. "I must be getting back at once."

"Good day, Miss Maidment," he answered.

And however aggrieved he might have felt at having had his will thwarted by a woman, he gave no outward sign of it, and opened the garden gate for her, if awkwardly, yet as courteously as any gentleman could have done; and she passed out of it into the white, dusty road.

Catherine Maidment was very pretty. Though the word pretty is always more or less inadequate when used to describe any personality possessing character, yet the word beautiful would have been less fitting still. She was not beautiful. Women, in speaking of her, were often wont to call her unusual, and perhaps the vague term conveyed the clearest definition possible of her. She was neither short nor tall; her figure, however, was so slight that she was generally spoken of and thought of as a small woman. She was very dark, with a broad, white forehead, and clear, delicate features, the character of which seemed to be all accentuated and defined by her small, pointed chin. She had dark, well-marked, straight eyebrows, and eyes that were always a surprise when she lifted them; for, instead of the brown or black eyes which ought to have gone with her dark colouring, she had grey ones. They were large and wide-opened, and in some moods of hers their soft grey colour looked almost blue. Her hair was a curious dark brown, nearly black, with lighter shades here and there of a reddish colour. It was very wavy and abundant, and was not hidden even by the large shady black hat she wore.

She had glanced at her watch as she left the farm-house, and walked away now very quickly, with rapid, even steps. She sighed very sharply, once or twice, and her face did not alter at all, nor lose the firm, decided expression it had worn in Mr. Roberts' garden. Suddenly she turned aside from the road towards a stile which led into a field. She got over the stile quickly, and was preparing to cross the field at the same rapid pace when a small stifled sound arrested her attention. It was the sound of a little frightened sob. On the grass at the corner of the stile was a little heap, which resolved itself into a small boy, with a miserable, tear-stained

little face. Catherine Maidment's face changed quickly and entirely as she looked at him. All the decision and firmness left it, and it grew suddenly soft, with a sympathetic look of interest.

"What in the world is the matter, Tommy?" she said, cheerily. "Why aren't you at home at tea?"

"Me and another boy's been playing cricket," said the small boy, sobbing, "and I've fell off the stile and hurted my foot. I can't get home and I can't walk no more."

Tommy's sobs redoubled as he reached the crisis of his short tale, but they were not so hopeless, and a wonderful look of relief had come to the small face at the sight of Miss Maidment.

"Can't walk!" she said. "Why, Tommy, you little goose, what have you done?" She knelt down beside him, and very tenderly touched and felt the small swollen ankle presented for inspection. Seeing at once that the child had sprained it, she rose again quickly. "Come along, Tommy," she said. "It will soon be well again, but you'd better not walk on it now. You hold my sunshade; I'm going to carry you home." Following up her words with a quick gesture, she stooped and picked up the small boy, whose woebegone little face now wore a faint smile at this unexpected and delightful way out of his trouble.

She walked almost as quickly with this burden in her arms as she had done before, and in less than ten minutes Tommy was handed to his mother, who, with a group of neighbours round her, cheerfully foreboding the worst possible end to Tommy, was watching for him from a cottage door.

"Lor, Miss Maidment," she said, as she took him from Miss Maidment's arms, "you've never carried him from the Elms stile! He'll have made your arms ache dreadful. But I do take it kind of you. Excuse my bein' so free as to say it, but it's like you to do it. There isn't many as would."

Catherine Maidment only smiled, and with a promise to his mother to come and see Tommy, and a few words of counsel about the sprain, she said good-night, and walked away up the village street.

The street in question was very short, consisting principally of scattered cottages; and Catherine Maidment soon reached its limits, and turned in at a large entrance-gate on her left hand. It was an imposing looking entrance with a pretty lodge just within it, and beyond were the spreading trees of a large park.

There were children playing in the pretty garden at the lodge. Catherine Maidment nodded to them with a smile as she passed, and walked still quicker on the soft turf till she came to a narrow gravel drive branching off the main road to the right. She turned down this and reached, almost directly, a narrow white house. It was picturesque, architecturally, being built in the fashion of two hundred years ago. Its windows were mullioned, and its door had a heavy stone door-frame. If all the grey stone front had been carefully painted white by some unappreciative tenant, climbing roses, clematis, and ivy had done their best to destroy the effect of that outrage on good taste.

Catherine Maidment opened the door and went through a small neat passage, into a room on the left hand. The room was oak-wainscoted; and furnished, though scantily, very carefully. Every bit of furniture, worn and shabby as it was, bore the unmistakeable imprint of constant care and good keeping. There was a large arm-chair in the window, with a leathern covering very worn, but carefully mended, and a mahogany frame that shone with polishing. Opposite to this was a low wicker chair with bright cushions. Catherine Maidment put her hat and gloves and sun-shade into this last, and proceeded to make the tea, which stood waiting on the table. While she did this, she looked round her with a quick look of surprise on her face. She had not expected to find the dining-room empty, and scanned every corner for some indication of the reason of its emptiness. She covered up the teapot when she had finished, and went to the door. "Margaret," she called; "Margaret!" For answer, another door at the end of the little passage opened, and a woman came out—a woman with a curious nondescript cap, something between the orthodox servant's cap and an old woman's. She had a very plain, hard-featured face, only redeemed by a pair of keen, sympathetic dark eyes.

"Yes, Miss Catherine," she said.

"When did Mr. Frank go out? I suppose he is gone out, as he is not in the dining-room?"

"Yes, miss, he's out. He went out about a quarter of an hour since. He said he was going for a stroll in the grounds; he wanted some air, he said."

"Very well, Margaret; thank you."

The woman disappeared, and Catherine Maidment went back into the room,

shutting the door, and sat down in her place at the head of the table. But she did not attempt to begin tea. She turned herself half round, so that she could see out of the window, which looked out over the park, and her face grew anxious, thoughtful, and careworn as she looked.

Suddenly the door-handle was turned with a jerk that made her start and turn hastily; it opened and a man entered.

"Hullo, Kit!" he said. "I wanted a mouthful of fresh air, and I didn't think you'd be back from old Roberts yet."

"How is your head?" Catherine asked, looking up with the anxious look on her face deepened.

"Oh, it's all right now. Come, Kit, let's have something to drink." And with these words, Frank Maidment threw himself into a chair opposite his sister; and folding his arms on the table, looked across at her.

Frank and Catherine Maidment were brother and sister, and it was very difficult to say whether the likeness or the unlikeness between them was the stronger. At first sight the likeness was most apparent. The general outline of the features, of course, bore a strong natural resemblance to hers, and Frank Maidment's eyes were, like his sister's, grey-blue. He was dark, like her; and his hair, like hers, was dark brown.

But there it ended. There was nothing in the expression of his grey-blue eyes that was like hers; hers were steady, his were restless and moved incessantly. His chin was square, not pointed; his mouth—though like hers, well cut—was, unlike hers, irresolute and wanting in strength. It was, however, completely hidden by a heavy moustache. He had a tall, broad figure, and his movements and pose, allowing for the difference in physique between a man and a woman, were also curiously like his sister's.

He stretched out one arm, and lazily took the teacup she handed him.

Catherine Maidment filled her own cup in silence, and then she said:

"Mr. Roberts will pay up on Saturday. I got a written promise."

"That's all right!" responded her brother, carelessly. "I never thought you'd get it out of him. But I never knew you were going."

"Yes, Frank, you did," she answered, gently, in a lower tone. "Why, you told me just now you did not expect me back yet."

Frank Maidment coloured slightly.

"Oh, Kit, yes, of course—I forgot; you

said you'd go at dinner. It's this confounded headache that's been making me such a fool all day." He held out his cup to his sister to be refilled. "Is the post in?" he said, quickly, and rather as if he wished to change the subject. "It must be. It's half-past six. Ah, yes," as the servant who had spoken to Catherine Maidment before tea, came in with a packet of letters.

"Thank you, Margaret," Catherine Maidment said, as the woman went out again. "Any for me?" she added, looking at her brother while he turned them over.

He shook his head, and began to open his own. Catherine relapsed into silence, and there was no sound in the room but the faint hissing of the tea-urn, and the slight crackling Frank Maidment made in handling his letters. He flung the two first down unopened, with a frown and a look of annoyance.

"Carters' bill for the seeds again," he said, "and that other fellow's, I believe, too. You'd better look at them," he added, to his sister.

She stretched out her hand for them, took them, and opened them silently, while he went on with the others. He read them, and laid them beside him one by one with various comments, articulate and inarticulate.

"Reynolds wants to see me to-morrow," he said to Catherine. "He'd better come here, I suppose?"

"Yes; or I could go to him," she said, abstractedly, being still occupied in studying the two bills. "It's those school subscriptions at Sonaleigh, is it?"

"Yes," he said. "Stewart-Carr!" he went on, taking up the last letter of the pile. "I saw his large fist; but I thought he'd keep. It's sure to be money. He's always wanting money. He can't have it this time, though, if what you said yesterday is true, Kit; he must wait till some more comes in at Midsummer. It won't hurt him to wait," he said, musingly, running his eyes over the letter. The next moment he threw it down excitedly. "Good gracious!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" his sister asked. "Matter! He's coming down here. Coming down here to stay!"

"Mr. Stewart-Carr is coming to live here for good?"

"I don't know. He says: 'Take up my residence in my house for a time.' I suppose that means just what he likes to

make it. But who would have thought of his coming here? I couldn't have imagined anything less likely if I'd had a bet on it!"

"When?"

"On the seventeenth. Yes, and he's got a lot of people, he says, coming on the eighteenth into the bargain. That means plenty of work to be got through first, somehow. He wants all the necessary orders given, and everything seen to. He's not been here for more than three years. Wasn't it before you came, Kit?"

"Yes. Just before I came."

"What on earth has induced him to come now? He must be going to be married, or something. He's the very last sort of man to settle down till he was obliged."

Frank Maidment got up and began to gather up his letters. "I'll go and tell them up at the Castle, I think," he said; "Mavors and Shepherd and the rest."

Catherine, who had risen too, laid her hand on her brother's arm. "Don't mind about them to-night," she said. "It'll be quite time enough if you let them know to-morrow. Stay here, and, when tea's cleared away, we can go through the things that must be seen to, and I'll make a list—"

"All that'll do to-morrow, Catherine, perfectly. I shall walk up to the house. I—my head isn't—I should like the turn in the air." He took her hand from his arm quickly but not angrily, and turned to go out of the room. "Who would have thought it!" he said again, as he shut the door.

Catherine Maidment rang for the tea to be cleared away. When this was done, she went to a large cupboard in the wainscot, and took down two large business-like looking books, filled with blue ruled paper, and containing entries that were nearly all in her own clear handwriting. She laid them on the table, and, seating herself before them, opened one of them, and began to make notes from it on a sheet of paper. She worked for an hour with intent energy. Then she closed it again; but, instead of opening the other, laid her hands on it, and her face down on them, with a heavy sigh.

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